

CountyCitizen

Summer 2002

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Unlocking Gridlock

Moving toward a Solution

**County gets a
New Set of Wheels**
Services to Go

**Big Sister is
Watching**
and Mentoring

**Traffic Court Goes
Paperless**

Ready, Set, Safety
A Hurricane Checklist

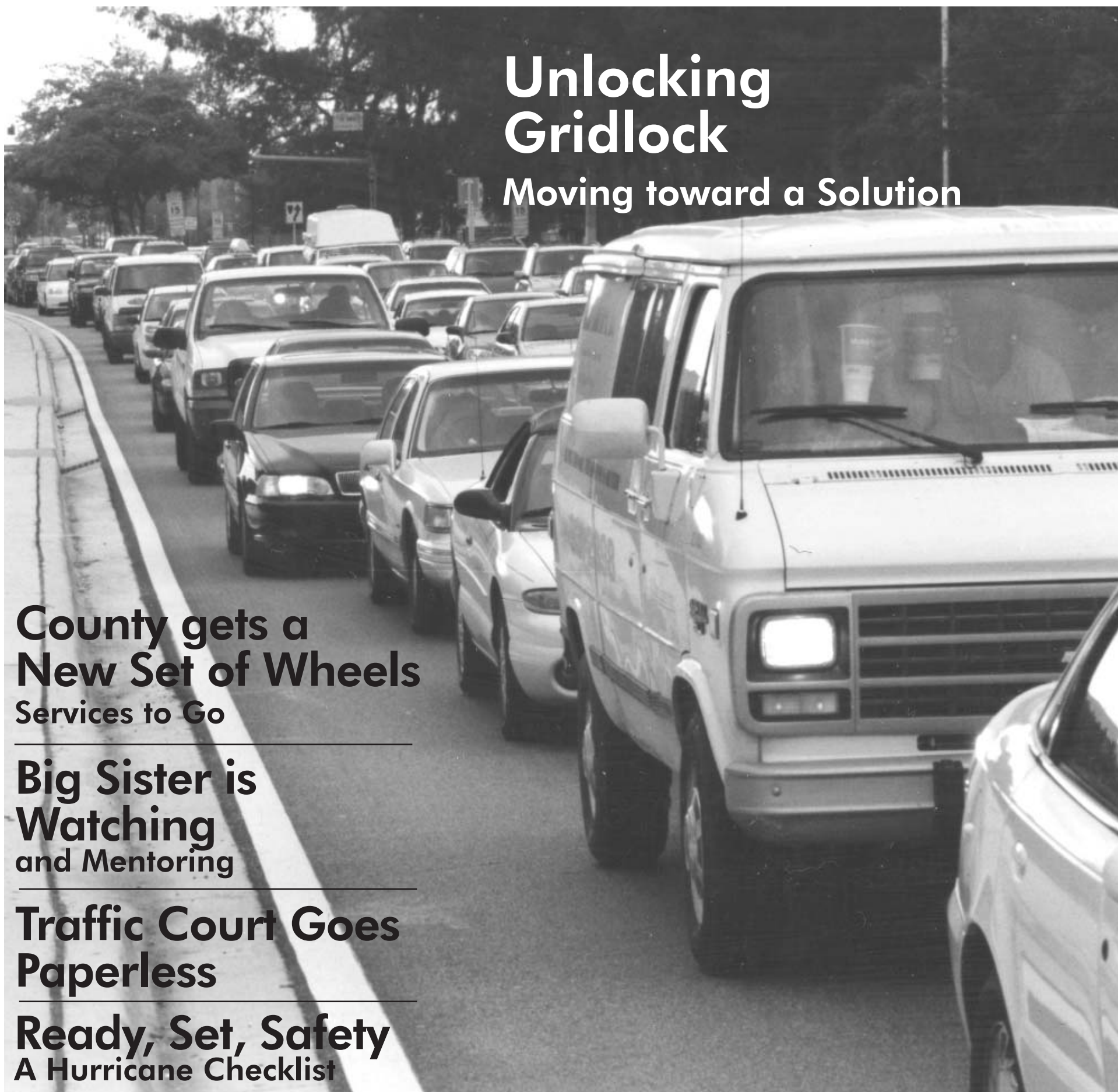


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SPEAKING *Of*

Make Pre-K available to all four-year olds

You don't need me to tell you that as a parent the most important responsibility you have is to make sure your children are properly educated. As I hope many of you know, care and education of the children of Miami-Dade County is a central objective of my administration.

That's why I am working so hard to provide our children with the opportunity to attend Pre-Kindergarten classes at the age of four.

As you read this, workers and volunteers are crisscrossing the state to collect petitions that will put on the statewide ballot – next November – an amendment to the Florida Constitution that will provide Pre-Kindergarten education for four-year-old children – as a matter of right. In fact, I think that proper early childhood education is so important that I am personally touring the state talking to citizens about it.

After all, our children are the messengers of our culture and civilization, and as we fight successfully to bring Miami-Dade County out of its economic woes and into a new level, it will be hollow unless all of our children are properly educated to become productive, happy adults.

It is perhaps hard to believe, but of the 30,000 children starting school each year in Miami-Dade County, fully 30 percent are tragically unprepared – intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

To combat this, we must catch them at a time in their lives when they hunger for learning, when they crave attention, when every cell in their young minds – the most powerful computer in the world – is a knowledge-absorbing sponge.

That's the age when we must begin to teach them how to learn.

In fact, the American Reading Association says that close to 90 percent of children who cannot read well at the end of the first grade still cannot read well by fourth grade.

By then, they may never catch up. And the heartbreak is that they probably know it.



Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas and Commissioner Rebeca Sosa (sitting) sign petitions in support of universal Pre-Kindergarten for all four-year olds at West Miami Middle School, February 20, 2002. Detective Steven Signori, his wife Linn and daughter Katherine; Mercedes Toural, associate superintendent, Education; Karin T. Brown, president, Dade County Council PTS/PTSA; Senator Javier Souto; Dr. Marta Perez, member, School Board of Miami-Dade Count; and Diana and William Jacoby look on.

Many factors affect the proper development of our children. They need good, nutritious food; they need to feel safe; they need quality healthcare; they need intellectual stimulation; and they need someone to hold them in their arms and assure them everything will be all right. Although parents will still bear the primary responsibility of teaching their pre-school children, Pre-K will be a giant step forward.

Government cannot give children love, and it cannot hold them in its arms and kiss away their tears. But, there are things government can do.

For example, a year or so ago, we had 4,000 children – newborn to 13 – on the subsidized childcare waiting list. By allotting additional county budgets – and obtaining matching funds from the state – we have been able to reduce that waiting list by more than 90 percent.

Similarly, we must make sure that our children receive the education they need to have a level playing field in the game of life. Pre-K can help give them that. But, only with your help.

Please download the petition at www.miamidade.gov/4prek/pre-k_Petition.htm and mail it to the address on page two of the form. Remember, you must be a registered voter for your petition to count – and don't forget to fill it out completely.

If you want more petitions to distribute among your friends, neighbors or even perfect strangers, call the Pre-K Committee at 305-541-4897.

Please do this, because our children are the future of our community and too many are at risk.

Alex Penelas
Miami-Dade County Mayor



Planning for Tomorrow

Bit-by-bit, Miami-Dade County is tiptoeing toward maturing into the world-class community we all want. Still vibrant and full of possibility, we are now facing many of the challenges that other big cities have dealt with for years. We also face some very unique challenges due to geography and immigration. But the good news is we're making progress and planning for our future.

As public officials responsible for the 21st largest metropolitan area in the nation, we are duty bound to manage not only for today's challenges, but also for those that lie ahead. Miami-Dade County has been growing at an average annual rate of more than 30,000 persons a year since 1950. At this rate, we'll have a quarter of a million more people living here by 2010. They'll commute to work, use water, build homes, and seek employment.

It only makes sense that people are attracted to Miami-Dade. We are home to some of America's premier art, culture, sports, and entertainment venues. Plus, our natural resources are unparalleled. We have the Everglades, some of the world's best beaches and, except for the Keys, the only living coral reefs in the continental United States.

Paradoxically, if we don't manage our already stretched resources – human, natural and financial – the same forces that draw people to our community will, in time, drive them away.

That's why we're setting things in motion today that will ready us for tomorrow's challenges, and lately transit has become one of our top priorities.

Mayor Alex Penelas has identified transit as a foremost quality of life issue. But it's the people – not government – who are driving this spirited discussion on transit. You are pressing the issue because gridlock is no longer a problem in a few pockets of the county, but everywhere in the county and beyond. In an unprecedented show of cooperation, public and elected officials from three counties are coming together and talking about our shared transportation concerns. It's only a matter of time before we begin making strides in establishing a regional transit braintrust.

And that's not the only thing people are talking about. Right now, the county is about halfway through a Strategic Planning Initiative that, when finished, will form a blueprint for building better government and help us use our resources in a more coordinated way. With the community's input, through surveys and focus groups, we've arrived at six strategic areas around which our planning and resources will be focused. They include, economic development, health and human services, neighborhood services, public safety, recreation and culture, and transportation. Visit our Strategic Planning website at www.miamidade.gov/stratplan for the latest strategic planning developments.

Making sure our community is at balance with the environment has also been part of our planning. The combined impact of Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and the ongoing Canker Eradication program has rendered Miami-Dade County one of the most de-forested regions in the nation. Trees are not only aesthetically desirable, but they are good for the environment. By joining forces with our state legislators, we are restoring that lost canopy through the county's Adopt-a-Tree program so homeowners can replant the county, neighborhood by neighborhood.

We are making great progress on water management issues implementing a number of the projects that are part of our \$50 million Local Mitigation Strategy well ahead of schedule. Flooding that plagued neighborhoods throughout the county will be dealt with and we'll also have a hand in staving off the effects of drought.

In addition, we continue taking steps to close the digital divide and offer our residents access to more efficient ways of doing business with our county thanks to technology. In fact, the library system is the largest provider of free Internet access in the county.

Most importantly, we've taken steps to make government do what it's supposed to do – serve the people. Mobile government units, online services that provide 24-hour access to the county and even the *County Citizen* are all part of our hard work to bring government closer to the people. We hope you notice.

Finally, we are addressing all these priorities while balancing them with budgetary restraint. We are all still feeling the effects of last year's terror attack on America. Revenue and interest rate projections did not pan out as originally predicted and we've had to revisit our budget to make adjustments. All departments have been asked to make reductions, while maintaining current service levels. I am confident that our diligent staff will achieve desired savings without significantly impacting residents, but it won't be easy.

Your ideas, comments, and suggestions count as we make our government even better. If you like what you read or want us to address an issue important to you, send us a note at news@miamidade.gov or call 305-375-2836. Visit our website at www.miamidade.gov. To reach me directly, please call 305-375-1032. And remember, we're more than county employees; we're your neighbors.



Steve Shiver
County Manager
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County Manager Steve Shiver announces new era of community connection at a January 29, 2002 press conference with "government on the go" bus in background.

Managing Water

Flood-prone areas safer thanks to new pump



Watershed Event – Mayor Alex Penelas, City of Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, District 6 Commissioner Rebeca Sosa and City of Sweetwater Mayor José "Pepe" Diaz in a symbolic gesture of starting the C-4 canal forward pumps, March 25, 2002.

Residents of several flood-prone Miami-Dade neighborhoods are thanking leaders for a new pump that is expected to protect them and their property next time a storm threatens the county.

Just eight months after crews broke ground on the project, the \$3.4 million pump station was up and running – more than a year ahead of schedule.

"Cooperation between our local, state and federal partners and requests from our concerned residents has made this day a reality," Mayor Alex Penelas said. "This technology will make it possible to more effectively respond to the safety and quality of life concerns of our residents while safeguarding the environment."

County leaders joined officials from all levels of government to inaugurate the pump, which is located near Miami International Airport and will provide flood relief to areas like Sweetwater, Flagami and West Miami.

The forward pump – which is just one part of a larger effort to reduce Miami-Dade's risk of flooding – can move more than 600 cubic feet of water per second. That's enough to fill an average swimming pool every three seconds.

"The marvel of this technology is that it doesn't leave our ability to respond to flood conditions to chance," County Manager Steve Shiver said. "With this pump we will not have to rely solely on tide levels or gravity to move water in and out of Biscayne Bay."

Residents had been complaining about flooding for years. County leaders, including Mayor Penelas and District 6 Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, who represents much of the area that will benefit, worked to get a \$50 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Together with local representatives of the United States Congress, leaders from affected cities and the South Florida Water Management District, they ensured that the pump station would become a reality.

Mayor Penelas emphasized that the pump is only one element of the overall flood relief plan. He said residents can expect to see improved drainage when the next flood occurs, followed by even more major improvements as additional parts of the plan are completed during the next few years.

DIRECT *from the District*



Pictured (left to right) Bill Dozier, Dozier & Dozier Construction; Jackie Tufts, Universal Truth Center; Stephanie Baldwin-Williams, Opa-Locka CDC; Commissioner Betty Ferguson, District 1; Michael Smith, Universal Truth Center; John Fleming, Universal Truth Center.

Commissioner Betty T. Ferguson

VISTA VERDE EMERGES

District 1 Commissioner Betty T. Ferguson and Miami-Dade Housing Agency director Rene Rodriguez, together with representatives of the Opa-Locka Community Development Corporation and Universal Truth Center Community Development Corporation, held a dedication ceremony marking the transformation of Vista Verde into affordable homes for low-income residents. The two community development corporations have rehabilitated 21 housing units in Vista Verde – an area that lies near 207th Street Road and 37th Avenue. As of April 2002, 90 percent of the homes were completed and a list of potential homeowners are waiting to move in.

Commissioner Ferguson has been a strong proponent of homeownership in her district, and this project is a realization of that effort.

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Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle

POINCIANA INDUSTRIAL PARK AT CENTER OF COMMUNITY RENEWAL



From left to right are Tiandra Sullivan, executive assistant to State Representative Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle, Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek and George Yapp of LEASA Industries.

District 2 Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle has placed economic development high on his list of priorities and along with the Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust is working toward expanding and bringing new businesses to Poinciana Industrial Park. On January 26, 2002, the Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust, Inc. in conjunction with Union Planters Bank and LEASA Industries Company, Inc. hosted a groundbreaking ceremony, announcing the start of a \$4.6 million expansion of LEASA Industries in the Poinciana Industrial Development Center of the Miami-Dade Empowerment Zone.

The expansion of LEASA Industries is the first in a series of major economic development initiatives that will result from creative public/private partnerships, linking major financial institutions with small, minority-owned businesses and a federally designated Empowerment Zone corporation. The LEASA Industries expansion will create some 60 new jobs for residents in District 2 and the Liberty City Empowerment Zone area, and will add 33,000 square feet of manufacturing and operational space to the existing LEASA facility.

Commissioner Rolle served as emcee for the event that featured remarks from Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek. Also on hand, Brian K. Finnie, president and CEO of the Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust and director of the Miami-Dade Office of Community and Economic Development, assistant county manager Tony E. Crapp, Tiandra Sullivan on behalf of State Rep. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Reuben Davis of the Liberty/Model City Empowerment Zone Neighborhood Assembly, Rick Lujan of Union Planters Bank, Karen Moore of the Task Force on Urban Economic Revitalization, Tony Burke, president of Tower Group Construction and George Yapp, president and CEO of LEASA Industries.

Also, in attendance were representatives from Per Scolas, a computer firm from The Bronx, NY, who are seeking to move their business to Poinciana Industrial Park.

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Ground Breakers – Attending the groundbreaking ceremony (left to right) are Gil Nehamkia of the Tower Group, Andrew Yapp, Brian Finnie, director of the Office of Community and Economic Development, Tony Crapp, assistant county manager for economic development initiatives, Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle, Inez Yapp, Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek, George Yapp holding his granddaughter Amanda Yapp, Rick Lujan, executive vice president of Union Planters Bank, and Karen Moore, executive director of the Urban Revitalization Task Force.

Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler

COMMISSIONER CAREY-SHULER TOURS MIAMI'S FIRST HISTORIC DISTRICT

Morningside was designated Miami's first historic home district, and it is not only a special place for its residents, but for all of Miami-Dade County. To share and celebrate the history and unique architecture of this extraordinary neighborhood, the Morningside Homeowners' Association recently hosted their 17th Annual Historic Home Tour.

Morningside is one of District 3's many showcase communities and Commissioner Carey-Shuler has long been a supporter of the Morningside Homeowners' Association's efforts.



Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Commissioner of District 3, attended her fifth Morningside Historic Home Tour accompanied by Morningside residents President Patrick McCoy, Alyce Robertson and Lynn Washington.

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DIRECT

from the District

Senator Gwen Margolis

OUTDOORS WITH SENATOR MARGOLIS

Intracoastal Cleanup

Senator Margolis, Team Metro, Community Councils 2 and 7, and the Miami-Dade Police Intracoastal Station teamed up with community volunteers to clean-up District 4. The project included cleaning up garbage in neighborhood and parks, painting exterior walls along main roadways, assisting neighbors with yard work, and cleaning up graffiti. The projects are meant to bring neighbors together and make the community a better place to live.



The City of Sunny Isles Beach dedicates a park in honor of Senator Gwen Margolis. Sunny Isles Beach Mayor David Samson and City Commissioners named the park after Senator Margolis as a symbol of her leadership and commitment to the people of District 4. Commissioners Lila Kauffman, Mayor Dave Samson, Senator, Gwen Margolis, Commissioner Norman Edelcup, and Commissioner Gerry Goodman are shown above.

Parks' Progress

Haulover Beach Regional Park will be undergoing a total overhaul in several phases. Plans include replacing septic tanks with sewer lines for renovations to existing bathrooms and the addition of new bathroom facilities; additional green space for picnicking and outdoor festivals; a fishing pier; additional slips at the marina; beach concessions; and a golf driving range. Senator Margolis is thrilled that plans are moving forward to improve Haulover for the 1.1 million visitors who use this recreational resource.

Biscayne Shores Park was a neglected, overgrown forest in Northeast Dade. With the support of Senator Margolis and Community Council 7, this park has been cleaned up and now showcases magnificent Royal Palms that were planted there many years ago and were being choked by weeds. While more work remains, the park remains a top priority for the overall revitalization of the Biscayne Shores area. Another major initiative for this area is a beautification project for Biscayne Boulevard in the Biscayne Shores/North Miami area. This plan is in the final stages and will ultimately enhance this corridor with a new and improved look.

Pelican Harbor Park in North Bay Village is another gem of Miami-Dade County Parks situated directly on Biscayne Bay. This park has the potential to become one of the county's premier destinations. The village has been collaborating with the county on the clean up of the beach areas, additional landscaping, signage improvements, volleyball and much more. Moreover, the Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Eco-Tourism Initiative has launched early evening kayak tours and will also be initiating a "Camp on the Sea/Pelican Island Adventure" program this summer.

Greynolds Park is one of Northeast Miami-Dade's oldest and most visited parks. In addition to campgrounds, hiking trails, a rookery and playground areas, the park will be reinstating weekend canoe rentals this summer thanks to Senator Margolis. The park had the canoes, but until recently had no funds to run the program. Senator Margolis responded to calls to reinstate the funding and allocated the money needed to hire professional staff to run the program and to provide new lifejackets for children. And after months of working with local animal rights groups to rid Greynolds of an overpopulation of abandoned and feral cats, their numbers are finally under control. Commissioner Margolis has vowed to keep county parks clean and safe for children and all residents of Miami-Dade County.

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Commissioner Bruno A. Barreiro

BARREIRO MAKES PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TALK OF TOWN

Commissioner Bruno Barreiro co-hosted with Mayor Alex Penelas the first of two Transportation Summits held on April 13. The summits provide a setting for the public to air their traffic grievances and suggestions while community leaders and elected officials gather their input. That input became the basis for the second summit, April 27, 2002 at the Radisson Hotel, 711 N.W. 72 Avenue. Comments from the April 13th summit and from comments posted at the **trafficrelief.com** website were analyzed, grouped together under themes and put to a public poll at the second summit.



Commissioner Barreiro addresses transportation concerns at a town hall meeting at Fienberg/Fisher Elementary April 2, 2002.

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Commissioner Rebeca Sosa

SOSA'S 'OPEN DOOR' POLICY

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Since taking the oath of office last June, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa has put forth a firm effort to improve constituent services in her district and promote transparency and accountability in county government. She has also worked and continues

to work to find solutions to residential flooding, which not only affects her home district, but residents throughout Miami-Dade County.

It is Commissioner Sosa's mission to maintain an "open door" policy in her district office so that citizens feel free to visit and discuss their concerns and share suggestions with the commissioner and her staff. The office, located at 6429 S.W. 8 Street, is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Many citizens have already taken advantage of that openness having worked with Commissioner Sosa to improve conditions in their neighborhoods. The residents of the Little Gables area finally got the go ahead to have S.W. 13th Street paved. Their efforts culminated in a groundbreaking ceremony January 25, 2002.



Pictured are Commissioner Sosa and members of the community at the ribbon-cutting for the four-way stop at the intersection of N.W. 60th Avenue and 5th Street.

Commissioner Sosa has also joined forces with citizens to eliminate dangerous traffic locations and intersections such as the intersection of N.W. 60th Avenue and N.W. 5th Street. As a result of their combined efforts, four stop signs were installed in order to decrease the number of accidents and speeding automobiles.

Residential flooding has long been a point of concern for Sosa and the residents in and around District 6. With the completion of the C4 Tamiami Canal Basin Project, residents will soon see relief. The project was spearheaded by Commissioner Sosa and local, state, and federal officials, and is part of the county's larger \$50 million Local Mitigation Strategy.

Commissioner Sosa hopes to continue serving the citizens of District 6, local municipalities and Miami-Dade County, and she stands by her belief that free and open partnerships between citizens and elected officials can lead to improved communities.

GOOD *Answers*

I lost a tree during the Canker Eradication program. Is there anything that the county is doing to help homeowners out?

The county's Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) started an Adopt-a-Tree Community Forestry program in the wake of the State of Florida's Canker Eradication program. Over half a million trees have been felled in Miami-Dade alone, and this communal loss of trees meant even more than the numbers revealed. Shade trees are extremely important in reducing air temperatures, controlling flooding and more. The Adopt-a-Tree program gives homeowners the opportunity to take home and plant up to two trees on their property. For information about upcoming events, call 305-372-6555. Even if you do not join one of the events, check out the website and plant a tree! www.miamidade.gov/adoptatree.

Is there a fee?

The trees are free! Funding for the Adopt-A-Tree program was provided through a \$6 million grant from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.



What should I bring to the Adopt-A-Tree event?

If you received an invitation in the mail, please bring it and identification with your name and address (i.e. a driver's license). If you did not receive an invitation, but live in Miami-Dade, you can still participate. Simply bring a picture ID showing that you live in Miami-Dade County to any of our events, and our volunteer staff will verify home ownership via computers on site.

I'm renting a house. Can I get trees through your program?

Yes, as long as you have written permission from the property owner. Bring a letter signed by the property owner to the events along with your picture ID. The Adopt-a-Tree web site is a great resource of information about how and where to plant a tree. You can find great information about the types of shade trees that do well in Miami-Dade, and you can get all kinds of helpful advice.

I've been working temporary jobs since September and I worry that one day I won't be able to make ends meet. Are there programs out there that can help me keep my lights on and off the streets?

The Miami-Dade County economy relies heavily on tourism and many of our residents have been hit hard by the economic slowdown. But long-term and short-term help is available through the county's Department of Human Services (DHS) for people who are experiencing difficulty meeting their basic needs. Qualified residents can receive up to \$250 relief on their Florida Power and Light electric bill through the FPL Care to Share Program. If you've already been evicted from your home, DHS can place homeless families for up to six months or get one month of rental assistance. There are even special programs for people who are disabled or for people who have been diagnosed with AIDS. Visit any one of 10 neighborhood service centers and find out if you qualify. To find the center nearest you call 305-375-5414 or log on to www.miamidade.gov and under the "Find A Service" select "Emergency Assistance."

Don't wait until you're out on the street to ask for help. Whether you're homeless or about to be, you can get help with housing by calling the Homeless Helpline at 1-8774-HELP.

GOOD *Service*

County Hall Gets a New Set of Wheels

County Hall is on the move and coming to a neighborhood near you. No, we're not relocating the Stephen P. Clark Government Center. We're bringing it closer to the people by offering an assortment of services on the go in a specially equipped bus.

In one of the most ambitious efforts to bring government services into neighborhoods to date, County Manager Steve Shiver unveiled the "government on the go bus" in January and took it on the road for a test drive at the Miami-Dade Fair & Exposition where it was parked outside Arnold Hall for the fair's duration.

"It's simply not enough to offer and promote county services through prints ads, Miami-Dade TV or miamidade.gov. We have to be proactive and take our services directly into neighborhoods," said Shiver. "Our residents shouldn't have to go out of their way to seek out our services or information."

Final touches are being added to the bus, which should be fully operational this summer. The new bus will be traveling throughout the county each week offering services such as voter registration, permitting, pet tag renewal, library cards, transit passes, homestead exemption and much more. County workers will staff the bus and are available to answer questions and point residents in the right direction if they can't provide immediate answers.

"This new bus will complement our Team Metro Offices – which are like mini county halls throughout Miami-Dade – our web portal, our Answer Center, and our other service access points," added Alex Muñoz, Team Metro director. "It beats the heck out of taking a drive downtown and standing in line."

The "government on the go" bus is hard to miss. It's fully wrapped in a mural of familiar community images and is peppered with words that name all the services offered by Miami-Dade County Government; some well known and others less well known. Once the bus is ready to officially hit the road, a link will be added to the front page of miamidade.gov telling residents where they can find the bus next.

That's not the only vehicle the county's rolling out. The Miami-Dade Public Library System is also hitting the road with two new Bookmobiles. These special buses are stocked with more than 4,000 books in English and Spanish, for all ages, and mirror the typical collection one can find at a branch library. What's more the bookmobiles offer videotapes, audiobooks, and laptop computers for accessing the library system's online catalog. The beauty of this system is that books and materials can be checked-out and returned at any Miami-Dade library. Books checked out at libraries can also be returned at Bookmobiles.

"We're very excited about this expanded service," said Ray Santiago, library system director. "We are better able to serve neighborhoods within our taxing district that don't have libraries close by. Our mission is to make it as easy as possible to expose people to books and learning, especially kids."

The bookmobiles are equipped with hydraulic lifts for disabled patrons and are air conditioned. For more information and schedules, call the Mobile Library Services office at 305-480-1729.

After you check out that favorite book, why not cuddle up with a furry friend who has, of course, been spayed or neutered. If you haven't gotten around to it, don't worry. The county's Mobile Animal Care (MAC) unit will get around to you. The MAC provides free spaying and neutering, dog licensing, rabies vaccinations, and pet adoption, on scheduled dates. Upcoming stops include the Caleb Center on May 4-6, West Miami City Hall on May 17-20, and the North Dade Justice Center May 24-27. For more information, call 305-884-SPAY (1101).

Recently, Miami-Dade Transit also teamed up with the Miami-Dade Health Department for the "Ride the Bus" HIV/AIDS Prevention campaign. Volunteers rode buses along some of the county's busiest routes that go through higher risk neighborhoods to educate residents on HIV/AIDS on March 27, 2002. Health officials and community partners will again "ride the bus" on May 13, June 13, and July 19. For more information, call 786-324-2409.

"We are entering a new era of community connection by making our government mobile," said Shiver. "This goes hand-in-hand with our web portal, which opens the doors of our government 24 hours day, and our new newspaper, the *County Citizen*, which delivers important and timely news to our residents. The reality is that we're more than county employees; we're neighbors, and everything we do as a government not only impacts our residents, but also our families," he added. "We just want to make it progressively easier for our residents to access services."



County Manager Steve Shiver greets the public and answers questions about the "government on the go" bus at the Miami-Dade County Fair & Exhibition March 25, 2002.

GOOD *e-Government*

Paperless Court? It's closer than you think

Miami-Dade's Clerk of the Courts was drowning in paperwork. Trying to keep track of the hundreds of thousands of traffic cases filed in Miami-Dade County each year had become a nightmare. Then they got the SPIRIT – the Simultaneous Paperless Image Retrieval Information Technology system.

"What Miami-Dade is doing with its court system is unique in the nation," said Costis Toregas, Public Technology, Inc.'s (PTI) president. "This is reinventing government."

The non-profit PTI, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, awarded the county its 2001 Technology Solutions Award for transforming the nation's fourth largest traffic court system into the world's first "paperless" court.

SPIRIT is a collection of E-Government projects that were started to improve service to the public, attorneys, and various agencies that process traffic cases. They are part of Miami-Dade County's effort to follow the public's mandate to do more with less.

In a presentation before the 2002 PTI Annual Conference, County Manager Steve Shiver stated: "Technology is a whole new channel for delivering service and without a doubt has had an organizational impact on the county."

County Clerk Harvey Ruvin was recognized as the "Public Technologist of the Year" at the conference, becoming the first-ever recipient of the award.

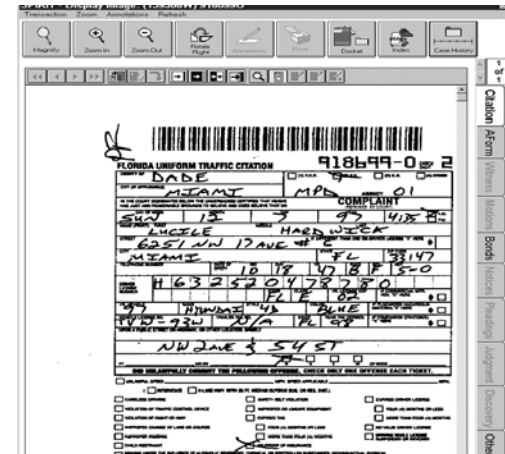
SPIRIT courtrooms have imaging workstations available instead of stacks of paper files that judges, attorneys and court clerks use.

Before the new "paperless" system was developed, clerks handled each piece of paper an average of 37 times. In preparing for court, clerks had to search vast filing rooms for the case files, pack them into suitcases, and courier the suitcases to various courtroom locations throughout the county. If a case was not properly packed, the file was not available to the judge during the hearing.

"In our paperless courtroom, we now have the ability to have a case placed on the calendar without having to search for the paper file," said Judge Samuel Slom, Administrative County Criminal/Traffic Court Judge. "This has improved our courtroom efficiency dramatically."



Before SPIRIT, clerks combed through thousands of citations (top) for court dates. Today's judges have this information at their fingertips (right) and view the information on their monitors. Judges spend more time working with people not paper.



SPIRIT was developed and implemented for the Traffic Division. However, many of the core architecture and application components were built with the intention of expanding the capability to other case types. The system incorporates calendaring, document imaging with workflow, paper scanning and indexing, and data entry.

Actions in court create a history that must be tracked and may create new documents that must be kept in the case file. In the past, these actions were indicated by "stamps" on the back of the traffic citation or hand written on various forms. The quality, legibility, and accuracy of these documents suffered depending on the judge, hearing officer or clerk who took the action.

"We no longer have to decipher another judge's handwriting," said Judge Slom. "Now, every notation a judge makes in the SPIRIT system is clearly printed and delineated."

The system has really sped up the court process. The state driver license history in the SPIRIT system is less than 24 hours old. In the past, paper copies provided in court, were often 30 or more days old. Clever attorneys took advantage of court inefficiencies to their client's advantage. SPIRIT has made that kind of strategy a thing of the past.

Today the Clerk's office processes more than 750,000 traffic tickets and only 15 clerks do the work that 45 used to do before the program was in use. Errors are rare and lost documents even more rare.

SPIRIT has lived up to its moniker improving employee morale by eliminating mountains of paper. Judges and their staff are now able to spend more time working with people instead of paper. E-Government is providing better service to the community by applying new technologies to reinvent government.

Next year Miami-Dade will have the opportunity to showcase more of its innovative technology applications. PTI's 2003 Annual Conference will be held in Miami.

Touch the Future



Miami-Dade Elections enters a new era with touch screen technology that makes voting as easy as using an ATM.

In 2000, all eyes were on Miami-Dade County as the presidential race dangled precariously in the balance like hanging chads on a punch card. Whether you cheered or jeered the results of the election, one thing became clear. A new system for voting was needed and needed fast.

The words "overvotes," "undervotes" and "butterfly ballots" became part of the American lexicon and for better or worse the 2000 election crystallized the idea that we all had a stake in finding a way to make every vote count.

In 2001, Elections and Procurement Management personnel teamed up to research, test and price the best voting system that money could buy. One that would make overvotes a thing of the past and one that would provide results in hours instead of days or weeks and leave no question as to voter intent.

Three companies submitted bids and a selection committee decided that the I-Votronic machine was the best. The committee made their recommendation to County Manager Steve Shiver who, in turn, recommended it to the Board of County Commissioners

(BCC). The BCC voted unanimously in favor of the equipment that would come at a price tag of nearly \$25 million.

The machines are easily programmed to provide a ballot in English, Spanish and Haitian-Creole. Visually impaired voters will also be able to cast a vote and do so with a much greater degree of independence.

Right now, elections staff and volunteers are involved in a massive community education campaign with demonstrations and presentations offered in every community throughout the year. New dates are constantly being added to their calendar.

"We've made a lot of progress and we hope to make more in roads in the community so that everyone who is eligible to vote has a chance to see how the technology works," Supervisor of Elections David Leahy said.

Leahy cautions that though the new equipment will make for a smoother election process, it only solves part of the problem.

"We are in dire need of pollworkers. If you are a registered voter in Miami-Dade County and are able to read and write English, you are exactly what we're looking for," Leahy said. "Pollworkers are needed throughout all of Miami-Dade County."

Groups or individuals who want a demonstration in their community should call 305-375-3155. Those who wish to work as pollworkers should call 305-375-5583. Visit **elections.miamidade.gov** and find out more about upcoming elections, eligibility, registration, election results or how to become a pollworker.

DIRECT

from the District



Commissioner Morales holds infant at a February 27, 2002 press conference announcing new car seat requirements for car rental agencies.

Commissioner Jimmy L. Morales

COMMISSIONER MORALES SECURES SAFETY FOR CHILDREN IN RENTAL CARS

You'll be seeing more child safety seats in rental cars thanks to legislation sponsored by Commissioner Jimmy L. Morales, District 7.

The new ordinance requires rental car agencies to make child restraint devices available to customers. Miami-Dade County is a premier tourist destination with visitors from all over the world. Many who rent cars are not informed about Florida's child restraint law. This ordinance requires that rental car agencies post signs notifying renters of the requirements.

Child safety experts accompanied Commissioner Morales at the Avis Rent-A-Car facility in Dadeland to illustrate the value of the ordinance with a buckle-up demonstration.

Contact Information:

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305-372-6103 (Downtown Fax)

DISTRICT OFFICE: 2000 SW 27 Avenue, Suite 102
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Ph. 305-529-0599 Fax 305-529-1188
District7@miamidade.gov

Commissioner Katy Sorenson

COMMISSIONER SORENSON'S OPEN LETTER TO DISTRICT 8

Dear Residents,

The long battle against locating a commercial airport at Homestead Air Reserve Base is finally over! After seven long years of strong community opposition, the County Commission and the Air Force have ended the possibility of an airport. Congratulations to everyone who participated in this great example of grassroots activism.

Now the hard work begins. We need to develop the base as a viable economic development project that will benefit and enhance the quality of life for all of south Miami-Dade. I have been working with several developers who have great ideas for creating good jobs in an environmentally sensitive way.

Soon I will be sponsoring an ordinance creating the South Miami-Dade Economic Development Agency, which will be charged with overseeing the development of the base as well as creating policy direction for economic development in all of south Miami-Dade. We expect to receive the property in September and shortly thereafter, there will be a developers' conference to solicit ideas and generate interest in the development.

US 1 Water and Sewer Project

In 1999, I was able to secure \$15 million in the county budget to install water and sewer mains down US 1 and that project is proceeding on time and on budget. This infrastructure improvement from S.W. 216th Street to S.W. 268th Street will enhance the ability of businesses to locate along US 1, a major transportation corridor. The project is scheduled to be completed this spring.

South Dade Busway Phase II

Phase I of the Busway has succeeded far beyond anyone's expectations. Phase II, which will continue the Busway to Florida City is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of 2003. This will enable riders to travel from Florida City to the Kendall Metrorail station, to downtown and all points in between. The Busway opens up our community and provides easier access to jobs and services throughout the county. Most importantly perhaps, the Busway will relieve some congestion on US 1.

Everglades Restoration

Getting the right quantity of clean water to the right place at the right time is at the essence of Everglades restoration. Even though there has largely been consensus that the Everglades needs to be restored, the battle between environmentalists, big agriculture, and urban utilities will continue throughout this 30-year \$8 billion state, federal and local effort. Currently, the project is overseen by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, consisting of representatives of federal, state, and local government agencies that have jurisdiction over the plan. It is led by the Department of the Interior. Also, a new group of "stakeholders," the water Resources Advisory Commission, which includes environmentalists and advocates, will serve as an advisory body to the South Florida Water Management District, as well as the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.



Residents of District 8 attend Busway workshop in South Dade.

Recently, Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed an agreement with President George W. Bush guaranteeing that whatever "new" water is recaptured during the reconstruction of Everglades "plumbing" will be supplied to satisfy first the needs of the environment. We must ensure that government keeps this promise and continue to be vigilant. We all need to take an active part in being informed and speaking up to ensure that the environment remains the top priority in Everglades Restoration. That includes finding a way to pay for this huge project over the time it is projected to take to complete. Both the state and federal government are trying to identify a dedicated source of funding so that we do not have to fight every year for funding during appropriations battles.

South Dade Cultural Arts Center

The groundbreaking for the long awaited South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center will take place in late spring, and will be the centerpiece to revitalizing this area. It will be located on six acres next to the South Dade Government Center and across the street from the Cutler Ridge Mall.

Education

The County Commission recently passed a resolution I sponsored supporting a statewide petition drive to require the state to fund voluntary pre-kindergarten education. Numerous studies have shown that the earlier we begin educating children, the better prepared they are to begin school and the more successful they ultimately are in completing their education. This effort, led by Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas, will provide a free, quality, public preschool education for all parents who want for their children.

Contact Information:

305-375-5218 (Downtown Office)
305-372-6073 (Downtown Fax)

DISTRICT OFFICE: South Dade Gov. Center
10710 SW 211 Street, Suite 204
Miami, FL 33189

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District8@miamidade.gov

DIRECT

from the District

Commissioner Dennis C. Moss

MOSS SCORES STADIUM FOR SOUTHRIDGE

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Dennis C. Moss, District 9, would not give up until South Ridge got the stadium it desperately needed. It has been a long time coming, but patience has paid off and now football games will be played under lights on a “real” football field and track stars can show their stuff on a “real” track. On March 20, 2002, Commissioner Moss hosted a groundbreaking ceremony at the South Ridge Stadium. Community leaders along with Commissioner Moss have fought long and hard to make sure that South Ridge received its stadium.



Commissioner Moss and community partners dig in at the Southridge Stadium groundbreaking, March 20, 2002.

“I could not let this die on the vine. South Ridge needed a stadium and had waited patiently for many years to receive it. I am very pleased and proud that now the students, as well as the community, will have a decent place to play,” Moss said. “Top notch recreational facilities are a must in our community and now South Ridge has a quality facility.”

MOSS TEAMS WITH COMMUNITY ON HOSPITAL

Citizens from the South Dade area came together to celebrate the opening of the Jackson South Community Hospital. Commissioner Dennis C. Moss was on hand to lead the celebration giving a brief history of the hospital’s origins, praising Jackson Health System for its support, and applauding community leaders whose persistence paid off.

“The citizens have been waiting since the late ‘50s to have a hospital in south Miami-Dade County. Since the closing of Kendall Hospital, there has been no public hospital in the South Miami-Dade community,” Moss said. “We must provide the basic necessities for all of our citizens and medical care is definitely one of those necessities.”

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Ph. 305-234-4938 Fax 305-232-2892
DennisMoss@miamidade.gov

The celebration lasted for more than four hours with rides and games for the children, hospital tours, blood pressure checks and other health screenings for the adults. Jackson South Community Hospital becomes the newest part of the Jackson Hospital System.

Senator Javier D. Souto

SOUTO REINS IN EQUESTRIAN FACILITY



Mayor Alex Penelas is flanked by assistant county manager Alina Tejeda Hudak and Senator Javier Souto at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Equestrian Center.

Equestrian enthusiasts from across Miami-Dade County joined Mayor Alex Penelas, Senator Javier D. Souto, District 10, and County Manager Steve Shiver for the opening of the new Tropical Equestrian Center at Tropical Park. A dedication ceremony and equestrian exhibition took place at the center’s new covered arena.

Senator Souto saw promise for this sort of park and lead the \$3.2 million project.

“I spotted the abandoned stalls and recognized how fruitful an equestrian center would be here in the community. I envision amateur, professional and youth riders taking part in both national and international competitions, and that could lead to an injection of tourist dollars into the local economy,” said Souto.

Contact Information:

305-375-4835 (Downtown Office)
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Miami, FL 33165
Ph. 305-222-2116 Fax 305-222-2120
Javiersouto@miamidade.gov

The new Tropical Equestrian Center is the first of its kind for Miami-Dade County and South Florida, equipped with a 200-feet by 275-feet standing steel roof, a promenade and a show arena.

Commissioner Joe A. Martinez

COMMISSIONER MARTINEZ JOINS FORCES WITH TEAM METRO AND MIAMI-DADE COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT TO “PAINT-OUT” GRAFFITI

Commissioner Joe A. Martinez and his staff joined forces with Team Metro and members of the Miami-Dade County Police Department two weeks in a row to paint over graffiti along 104th Street between 142nd Avenue and 143rd Place and along S.W. 147th Avenue between 80th and 84th Streets.

Dozens of people including children joined the Commissioner for the graffiti paint-out. “We accomplish several goals by rolling up our sleeves and working in the community. First, we are signaling to the graffiti artists that this type of activity will not be tolerated, and at the same time we give residents another reason to be proud of their neighborhoods,” said Commissioner Martinez, District 11.

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305-375-5883 (Downtown Fax)
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Ph. 305-552-1155 Fax 305-552-0577
JoeM@miamidade.gov



Kids and police officers take a break from the Graffiti “Paint-Out” for this snapshot.

GOOD *People*

Adi di Prima is more than a 'Big Sister'

"The only way to change the world is one person at a time – and everything I can do personally to make the world a better place is worth doing." That's the philosophy that Adrienne di Prima lives by, and her history of community service proves she is a woman of her word.



Adi di Prima and little sister Hanna mix service and friendship working on a Habitat for Humanity Home.

Adrienne, called "Adi" by her friends, has been actively involved in community service, but her most notable contribution has been as a Big Sister in the Big Brother/Big Sister Program here in Miami-Dade. Adi and her 'little sister' Hanna have been together since 1997, and will soon be receiving their 'five year' plaque at the next September Awards Banquet.

On her experience, Adi comments, "The friendship and companionship that Hanna and I have developed over the years is the most rewarding. At first you start out thinking that you're going to change the world and eventually you realize how even the littlest things make such a big difference in the life of one child. You start focusing on how you are interacting with

that child and how it's actually changing your life so much.

Winning Hanna's trust was a big step during the first couple of years. The first year was most difficult because of her family situation. "She was terrified to go anywhere she hadn't been before, and very reluctant to ask for anything or express her opinion on any suggestions that I made," Adi said. "Little by little we expanded her exposure to various venues throughout the county."

Adi is a 20-year county veteran, and now works as a manager in the E-Government department. And what perspective does her career with the county bring to her role as a big sister?

As a big sister, Adi instills a sense of giving back to the community with Hanna. Together, they participate in many volunteer and charity activities, including Hands-on-Miami, the Museum of Science TRIPOD program, United Way and Habitat for Humanity, to name a few. Adi is a long time blood donor, having donated over 200 units of blood in her lifetime.

For all the giving Adi has done in her life, she now hopes that others will be inspired. Her cousin, Todd Joseph Ouida was one of the thousands of victims that perished in the September 11th terrorist attack at the World Trade Center. In his memory, Adi, her friends and family have established the The Todd Joseph Ouida Memorial Children's Fund to celebrate Todd's life and create a meaningful legacy. The mission of this fund is to support psychological services for children of families in need.

Adi is an inspiration to others. She's more than a county employee, she's a neighbor.

NEWS *and Notes*

Horsing around

The Tropical Equestrian Center opened to the public in March with a cavalcade of horses and horse lovers strutting their stuff. Senator Javier Souto, County Commissioner of District 10, laid the groundwork for the park more than six years ago. The Equestrian Center – the first of its kind in South Florida – has over 340 stalls available for rent to competitors, and two sand show rings – one for performance and one for warm-ups. It also has two grass courses and a two-story judges' or secretaries' booth, and can seat about 1,000. The Equestrian Center can also host full-size rodeos, if necessary bringing in portable bleachers for up to 10,000 spectators. Already, more than 30 events are planned. For information about upcoming events at the Tropical Equestrian Center, call 305-554-7334.



Young rider in top form at Equestrian Center opening.

Bus routes to Marathon now available

Miami-Dade Transit extended Metrobus service to Marathon in the Florida Keys. Selected routes of the existing Metrobus Dade-Monroe Express will connect Tavernier, Islamorada, and Marathon to Key Largo and Florida City. Now residents of South Miami-Dade will be able to tap into job opportunities in the Upper and Middle Keys.

For trip planning and schedules, call Transit Information at 305-770-3131. If you live south of S.W. 216th Street call 305-891-3131.



The CourtCare center is equipped for children of all ages.

Childcare available for parents with court dates

Have a family court case and nowhere to leave the kids? Don't fret, you can leave them at the Courthouse Center's CourtCare, where children can enjoy finger painting, Elmo and Oscar, books and lots of TLC inside the drop-in childcare facility. CourtCare is a "safe place" for any child whose family is involved in a family or domestic violence matter requiring them to

appear in court. Anyone who steps inside the brightly lit room will feel like a kid all over again! The loving staff from YMCA make sure that even just for a while, kids are relieved of their household trauma. CourtCare is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Staff can care for up to 15 children at any given time. It is located at the Lawson E. Thomas Courthouse Center, 175 N.W. 1st Avenue, Miami. For more information, call 305-349-6020.

Fresh Start offers drivers second chance

In a week of amnesty, the county's Fresh Start pilot program allowed 2,000 of the county's 80,000 drivers with suspended licenses or bench warrants to wipe their records clean. To get their "fresh start," drivers who have strayed from the road of righteous driving are introduced to the Drive Legal Program, which helps defendants become legal drivers again and pay their unpaid fines.

Chairing the "Fresh Start" pilot program is Associate Administrative Judge Steve Leifman who held "Amnesty Day" – a weeklong event held this past March. The pilot program was so successful that "Fresh Start" has partnered with the Clerk's office and will soon become a permanent telemarketing program for the Drive Legal Program. To learn more about the Fresh Start Program, call 305-548-5363.



Newly restored Chinese Bridge dedicated at Deering

On Saturday, April 20, 2002, a ribbon-cutting ceremony introduced the Chinese Bridge – a historical landmark at the Deering Estate at Cutler. The Chinese Bridge was built by Miami industrialist Charles Deering more than 85 years ago. Two of the Deering Estate's tour guides, Skip Taylor and Josiel Morera, made it

Park & Recreation workers Skip Taylor and Josiel Morera put on final touches on Deering's restored Chinese Bridge.

their personal goal to bring the bridge back to its natural splendor which had been in poor shape after Hurricane Andrew hit in 1992. With the assistance and sponsorship of the Rotary Club of Dadeland-Pinecrest, Taylor and Morera were able to complete this project, to the delight and benefit of Miami-Dade County residents. The audience enjoyed a colorful Chinese Lion Dance presented by the Organization of Chinese Americans. More events are planned during May which is designated Asian-American Heritage Month.



Two legged and four-legged fun at Amelia Earhart Park

Amelia Earhart Park offers a space for the skater in you... and one for your little dog too! The park, located at 401 East 65 Street in Hialeah, is home to both the Bark Park and the Skate Park!

The five-acre Bark Park is a dog's paradise but owner's will love it too because it's completely fenced in and safe. There's even a special area for smaller dogs. Amenities include paved walkways, benches, shade trees, waste dispenser stations, and specially designed drinking and spray fountains for thirsty pooches, and their owners. Better yet, Bark Park admission is free.

Pictured (left to right) at the entrance of the new Bark Park at Amelia Earhart Park in Hialeah, Kelly Grimm of the Humane society of Greater Miami; Vivian Donnell Rodriguez, director of Miami-Dade Parks; Miami-Dade County Commissioner Natacha Seijas; Lars Bergquist, manager for Amelia Earhart Park; and Paula Crouthamel, a Miami-Dade Parks landscape architect.

The Skate Park – for roller-skaters and skateboard enthusiasts – features state-of-the-art equipment manufactured by Skate Wave. It offers an aggressive street-skating course, three- and four-foot quarter pipes, a fun box, a three-sided pyramid, a spline ramp and a combo track grind rail. And if you don't know what these things mean, don't worry... your children most likely do!

The Skate Park is open from 3 p.m. to dusk on weekdays and all day on weekends. Admission is \$5 for a two-hour session.

A feather in the cap for Miami International Airport

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Southern Region's "Feather in the Cap" Award for 2001 went to our very own Miami International Airport. This award is presented to commercial airports that have achieved a Zero Discrepancy Rating for five consecutive years during the FAA's Part 139 annual inspection. Or, in layman's terms, Miami International Airport has been exemplary in the area of safety – with high achievements in response time to simulated emergency, clean and clear departure and approach surfaces, fire and rescue training, and more! "Safety and security is our number one cornerstone at MIA. We are working to make sure that we continue with zero discrepancies in our annual inspections for years to come," said Aviation Director Angela Gittens.



Skaters galore showed up to test drive the new skating ramps at Miami-Dade County's first ever Skate Park at Amelia Earhart Park.

Unlocking Gridlock

People move the discussion

Several months ago a Miami-Dade County grand jury warned that if serious measures weren't taken, the county could become one big traffic jam. Those words of warning have mobilized county officials to partner with the public on finding solutions and at dozens of meetings on the countywide traffic plague, it's been the people who are driving the discussion.

The grand jury issued a 30-page report that called Miami-Dade the most congested metropolitan area of its size in the country, and the third most congested in the nation overall. With population projected to increase by one million people by the year 2020, the report predicted that the gridlock situation "will get much, much worse."

Half-penny remedy

The grand jury recommended that a half-penny county sales tax to expand the public transit system be placed on this November's general election ballot. The panel warned that failure to do so could mean losing billions in matching federal and state funds.

The *Miami Herald* echoed these sentiments in an editorial that cautioned: "As clogged as our roads are now, they stand to get much worse....mass transit is the only way to avoid gridlock in coming years."



Concerned residents gather at the April 13th summit to talk traffic.

Public moving talks

At public meetings throughout the county, residents are voicing strong opinions about how to reduce the area's traffic congestion. County residents have traditionally relied on the automobile to commute to and from work. In fact, a study several years ago showed that 92.3 percent relied on private vehicles while only 2.7 percent used public transportation. But at public forums being held in every one of the county's 617 political precincts there are indications that the tide may be turning.

Hundreds of residents have attended these traffic town hall meetings and their suggestions have included expanding Metrorail and increasing the frequency of Metrobus routes so that buses conveniently run more often.

Two countywide Citizen Transportation Summits have been scheduled on two Saturday mornings in April at the Radisson Mart Hotel. At the first meeting on April 13, about 700 residents heard from county officials and transportation experts then split up into four workshops that hammered out issues including bus and rail, highway and road improvements, funding sources, and oversight of funds.

A second Citizen Transportation Summit was held April 27, 2002. The objective at this forum will be to build consensus on a general plan to counteract the area's transportation crisis.

All told, more than 100 public meetings on traffic matters will have been held by November when voters decide on the half-cent tax.

Plenty of time remains to let your voice be heard. Log on to www.trafficrelief.com to see a schedule of events, learn about transportation alternatives, or to view an electronic "bulletin board" where you can read the opinions of others or post your own.

"The people's viewpoints and suggestions have been very revealing," said Danny Alvarez, director of the Miami-Dade Transit Agency. "It's impossible to solve this problem in a vacuum. The website helps us quantify what the problems are from a motorist standpoint and that's the best information you can have."

In May, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners will consider the idea of a sales tax ballot measure, and whether the increase should be a half penny or a penny. A public hearing will be held as the commissioners weigh the choices. Visit www.miamidade.gov and select the "Commission" link to access board agendas.

READY, SET, SAFETY

Your Hurricane Checklist

By Bill DelGrosso

Living in South Florida means we have to live with the threat of hurricanes. The Atlantic Hurricane Season runs from June 1 through November 30, but Miami-Dade emergency managers added May to the season as Hurricane Preparedness Month.

It is never a question of if a hurricane will strike; it is a matter of when, so now is the time to get your home and workplace ready. And there is no better time to review your plans than on this year; the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Andrew.

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has specific recommendations on how you can prepare. They can save your life and your property.

✓ **Begin with a solid hurricane plan.** Some people actually write them out and it is wise to do so. You need to identify your vulnerabilities. Do elderly loved ones live with me or will they come stay with me as a storm approaches? Are my children safe? Are my pets safe? Have I purchased all of my hurricane supplies – food, water (one gallon per person per day), batteries, personal hygiene items, and medicine for at least two weeks? Is my insurance current? Do I have copies of all my important documents and are they in a safe place? Are my house and yard in order?

✓ **Are you in the Zone?** Look in BellSouth's White pages and determine if you are in an evacuation zone, and, if so, make arrangements to stay with friends or family members; well before the season so there is no guessing and scrambling if a storm approaches. If you have no one to stay with, the American Red Cross will open Hurricane Evacuation Centers (HEC's) that will provide a safe place, but these are shelters of last resort and you must bring medicine, sleeping bags and snacks with you. No pets are allowed, so make plans to leave your pet with your vet. Miami-Dade Transit has buses that will take residents from hurricane pick-up points to the HEC's. Pick-up sites can be found on miamidade.gov.

✓ **Take stock.** If you are not in an evacuation zone, make sure your home is safe. Conduct an inventory of your shutters before the season and make sure all the parts are in place. If you don't have shutters, the Building Code Compliance Office can help you pick the best ones for your home. Seniors, 65 and older and with a household income of less than \$25,000, can qualify for free shutters thanks to the mayor's shuttering program by calling 305-438-8604.

✓ **Special needs.** Many residents need assistance with their daily living; skilled nursing care, or use life saving medical equipment that requires electricity. The Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program provides specialized evacuation facilities, and can assist with transportation of these residents. You must contact OEM and request an application by calling 305-513-7700. TDD: 305-468-5402 before the hurricane season. Applications are also available on the OEM website as well.

✓ **Check with your employer.** Like most companies and organizations, your workplace or department probably has an emergency plan. Find out from your supervisor what might be expected from you if a disaster occurs. Do you have duties before the storm hits, and if so, find out when you will be sent home to protect your household. After the storm how will you find out when and where you should report to work? Get a copy of your departmental emergency plan and confirm what your role will be. The Miami-Dade Communications Department will be issuing an Employee Hurricane Preparedness Guide to all Miami-Dade employees at the start of the hurricane season. This useful brochure contains a lot of helpful information especially on workplace preparation, reporting to work, and payroll.

✓ **Get answers from the source.** The county's Answer Center can inform you on disaster preparedness from 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday through Friday. As a storm approaches, the Answer Center will operate 24-hours a day. The phone number is 305-468-5900, for the hearing impaired TDD: 305-468-5402. Operators speak English, Spanish and Haitian Creole. Or go online at www.miamidade.gov/oem.

Ready, Set, Safety

Now that you have your checklist in order, you'll be prepared if the threat of a storm becomes real. Always stay tuned to television and radio stations for the mayor and County Manager's bulletins. For up to the minute information, log onto OEM's website. Unlike in the past, when emergency managers would activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to different levels as storms approached, they are now using the **ready, set, safety** system to inform residents of the level of alert they should follow.

The **ready** mode indicates that a threat has been identified such as a tropical storm. This is the time when residents should review their hurricane plans and ensure that all their supplies are in order. The **set** mode indicates that a hurricane will likely affect the community. At this stage, you should begin implementing your hurricane plan and protecting your loved ones and property. This is the time to evacuate if you are in a zone or are a special needs resident. The **safety** mode means the community will definitely feel the impact of the storm. This is the time to shelter in place, cease all outdoor preparations and retire to your home or shelter's safe room. The mayor, in concert with the media, will tell you what mode we are in.



In the ten years since Hurricane Andrew, our emergency managers and our community have learned a lot about safety and preparation. Tougher building codes mean our homes and businesses are safer. But it doesn't mean we can lower our guard. It is always better to be prepared and safe than to be sorry or worse.

This information and much more is available on the county's web portal at www.miamidade.gov. If you don't have access to the Internet call the Answer Center at 305-468-5900.

CUT it Out

Emergencies 911

Police Non-Emergency305-4 POLICE
Fire Non-Emergency.....786-331-5200

Answer Center
(Open M-F, 8am-8pm)305-468-5900
Animal Services Unit.....305-884-1101
Bus and Rail Information.....305-770-3131
Center for Employment Hotline ...305-375-5725
Community Councils305-375-2842
Consumer Protection Hotline.....305-375-3677
Consumer Service Switchboard ...305-375-1250
County Manager.....305-375-1032
Jackson Health System305-585-1111
Libraries305-375-BOOK
Park & Recreation.....305-755-7800
Parking Violations305-275-1133

Team Metro Neighborhood Service Centers
Downtown.....305-375-4845
North Central305-626-7976
Caleb Center305-636-2333
Northwest305-557-2171
Kendall305-270-4979
South Dade.....305-234-1510
Melrose305-638-7231
University305-222-2133
Northeast.....305-947-9858
West305-480-1700

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Alex Penelas, Mayor
Board of County Commissioners
Senator Gwen Margolis, Chairperson

Betty T. Ferguson
District 1
Dorrie D. Rolle
District 2
Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler
District 3
Senator Gwen Margolis
District 4
Bruno A. Barreiro
District 5
Rebeca Sosa
District 6
Jimmy L. Morales
District 7

Katy Sorenson
District 8
Dennis C. Moss
District 9
Senator Javier D. Souto
District 10
Joe A. Martinez
District 11
Vacant
District 12
Natacha Seijas
District 13

Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Courts
Steve Shiver, County Manager
Robert A. Ginsburg, County Attorney

Miami-Dade County provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate on the basis of disability.